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# CITY OF BOULDER



December 17, 2015

Dear Mayor and Members of City Council,

Thank you for your request for input from the Water Resources Advisory Board (WRAB) in advance of your 2016 City Council retreat. The WRAB appreciates the opportunity to share its recommended goals and priorities and has provided responses to each of the six questions identified by council below.

**1. What are your top priorities within the framework of the council work plan adopted at the last city council retreat?**

WRAB's top priorities within the current framework remain primarily related to resilience and associated comprehensive planning. Boulder's long-term resilience is highly dependent on the city's ability to deliver basic services including water supply, sanitation, local drainage systems, and flood management. Service levels, infrastructure needs, and funding must be continually evaluated in the context of evolving "acute shocks and chronic stresses."

During 2016, WRAB also expects to make a recommendation to council on updates to the Wastewater Collection System Master Plan and Stormwater Collection Master Plan. These plans will guide prioritization of future investment in these critical systems. WRAB also expects to make recommendations on additional floodplain mapping and mitigation studies that will inform a more comprehensive assessment of the city's flood management goals and investment priorities.

WRAB will also be providing council with its annual recommendation on the capital improvements programs (CIP) for the water, wastewater, and stormwater/flood management utilities. As in past years, we expect that this year's CIP recommendation will focus on continued strategic investment to maintain regulatory compliance, rehabilitate and/or replace aging water and wastewater infrastructure, and reduce risks to life and property associated with both minor and major precipitation events. An important consideration in the CIP will be the pace at which the city addresses infrastructure issues while balancing desired levels of service and financial constraints.

Another major focus for WRAB during 2016 will be looking at how utilities costs are apportioned across customers. The Utility Rate Study initiated earlier this year is considering how the existing rate structure is addressing guiding principles related to discouraging wasteful use, fairly allocating costs across customer classes, meeting revenue requirements, providing revenue stability and predictability, responding to changes in supply and demand, and encouraging development that minimizes stormwater impacts. While the goal of the study is not to generate additional revenue, allocation of costs across customer classes will be an important consideration as the city considers the pace of infrastructure investment. Given the significant gap between current funding levels and infrastructure needs, the WRAB also supports evaluation

of other potential revenue sources to supplement rates and fees. The WRAB expects to provide council with a recommendation on potential changes to the current rate structure by the end of 2016.

**2. What would you like to see done that would further advance the council goals?**

WRAB recommends that council provide timely and thoughtful consideration of the priorities identified above along with policy direction and funding that supports the long-term resilience of the community's three water utilities.

**3. How can your board or commission specifically help reach the council goals?**

The WRAB can continue to assist council as a technical and policy advisor on water-related issues. The WRAB provides detailed analysis and recommendations on water resources related issues that support more efficient and effective consideration by council. The WRAB also plays an important role as a forum for public feedback and community discussion. In particular, WRAB can provide an objective technical prioritization in situations where different neighborhoods have conflicting objectives or are competing for limited resources. Finally, the WRAB can support council in communicating with the public on water-related issues.

The WRAB recommends increased interaction between council and the city's boards and commissions. In particular, joint facility or project tours involving both council and WRAB members would provide an opportunity for council to leverage WRAB knowledge and better understand projects and issues before council is asked to make a decision. Key projects to consider touring in 2016 could include the Betasso Water Treatment Facility rehabilitation, the wastewater collection system rehabilitation program, and the Wonderland Creek flood mitigation project.

**4. Are there city policies that need to be addressed that would enable your board or commission to function at a higher level?**

The WRAB has not identified any specific city policies that need to be addressed at this time. As noted above, WRAB would encourage measures that allowed a more significant level of interaction between council and the boards and commissions.

**5. Are there other items that council should address in the coming year?**

WRAB recommends that council continue to work to build positive relationships and partnerships in the region that can help us meet our goals. This should include both government agencies and private entities such as irrigation ditch companies. Particularly in the water resources area, regional collaboration and forming of effective coalitions to influence statewide issues are critical to Boulder's ability to maintain efficient and resilient systems into the future.

**6. Are there other priorities outside of the council goals that your board or commission would like to address in the coming year?**

WRAB's priorities for 2016 fit within the broader council goals including the focus on resilience.

Respectfully submitted,

Water Resources Advisory Board

*Vicki Scharnhorst, Chair*

*Dan Johnson, Vice Chair*

*Mark Squillace*

*Lesley Smith*

*Mike Barnes*